



NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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(10/9/25) Southern 7 Health Department Reminds Residents of Restrictions of Animals Inside Food Service Establishments

Southern 7 Health Department (S7HD) is reminding the public of federal restrictions in place regarding allowing animals inside food service establishments, including restaurants, grocery stores, bars, and cafés, as required by the FDA Food Code.

Only service animals that are specifically trained to assist individuals with disabilities are permitted to enter food service establishments. Emotional support, comfort, or therapy animals do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and therefore are not permitted inside food establishments.

The restriction is in place to protect the health and safety of both the public and food service employees by preventing contamination and maintaining sanitary conditions where food is prepared, served, or stored.

“We understand that many people love to bring their pets along when shopping or dining out,” said Miranda Adams, S7HD Environmental Health Director. “However, to maintain public health standards and ensure compliance with state law, pets must remain outside designated food service areas.”

Patrons with service animals should not be asked for documentation, but may be asked whether the animal is required because of a disability and what specific task it is trained to perform.

The Health Department encourages all residents and business owners to help maintain a safe and sanitary environment for everyone by following these regulations. For more information, contact S7HD at 618-634-2297.

Southern 7 Health Department is a public health department that serves communities of the seven southernmost counties in Illinois focusing on disease prevention, promoting healthy lifestyles, ensuring access to healthcare services, and serves as the Head Start Grantee for the region.

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